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DNAJ proteins: more than just “co-chaperones”

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2014

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Kakkar, V. (2014). *DNAJ proteins: more than just “co-chaperones”: Implicaties voor eiwit-aggregatie ziektes*. [Thesis fully internal (DIV), University of Groningen]. [S.n.].

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DNAJ proteins: more than just “co-chaperones”

Implications for protein aggregation diseases

Vaishali Kakkar
2014

The research described in this thesis was conducted at the Department of Cell Biology (Division: Radiation & Stress Cell Biology), University Medical Center Groningen, University of Groningen, The Netherlands.

The research was supported by grants from Senter Novem (IOP-IGE07004), a discovery initiative grants sponsored by the High Q foundation (now CHDI) and a grant by the Nederlandse Hersenstichting (grant nr. 15F07(2).58).

Printing of this thesis was financially supported by University of Groningen and Graduate School for Drug Exploration (GUIDE) at University Medical Center Groningen.

Cover Idea/Concept: Vaishali Kakkar

Cover Design: Randy Wind; contact: wind.randy@gmail.com

Thesis Layout: Midas Mentink; contact: www.midasmentink.nl

Thesis printed by Ipskamp Drukkers, Enschede



ISBN (print): 978-90-367-7310-2

ISBN (electronic): 978-90-367-7311-9

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university of
 groningen

DNAJ proteins: more than just “co-chaperones”

Implications for protein aggregation diseases

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. E. Sterken
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

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PROLOGUE

More than 50 years ago, Ferruccio Ritossa, while studying nucleic acid synthesis in *Drosophila melanogaster* salivary glands, observed a different “puffing” pattern in the chromosomes of the flies when the incubators were accidentally shifted to elevated temperature. Following up this serendipity, he showed that cells can activate a specific transcriptional program when exposed to elevated temperatures, later referred to as “heat shock response”. A decade later, Alfred Tissieres discovered the Heat Shock Proteins (HSPs) that were the main products induced by this transcriptional program. The understanding that heat unfolds proteins and they next can form toxic aggregates which could be counteracted by this transient induction of HSPs (via their chaperone actions) provides the basis for the concept of cellular protein homeostasis. All cells are continuously subjected to changes in intra and extra-cellular conditions that impede on protein folding. Further, given the macromolecular crowding within the cells it runs the risk to cause protein aggregation. Protein aggregates hallmark almost all the major neurodegenerative diseases known today, suggesting that an imbalance in the maintenance of protein homeostasis underlies these diseases. This thesis aim at providing an insight into the role of one subset of heat shock protein families, i.e. the class of DNAJ (Hsp40) proteins and the role they play both as cause for and potential therapeutic target in age-related neurodegenerative diseases, with a particular focus on Huntington’s Disease.

